Rifle Linked To JFK Plot?

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PUTNAMVILLE, Ind. (AP) — A rifle of the same model as the one named as the gun used in the assassination of President John F. Kennedy was found in a Terre Haute, Ind., hotel three days after Kennedy's slaying, Terre Haute's former police chief said Monday.

Frank Riddle, the retired chief, said the rifle, a 6.5mm Italian Mannlicker-Carcano, was traced to a salesman from San Antonio, Tex.

Riddle, who retired Feb. 15 after 16 years as Terre Haute police chief, now is in charge of custody at the Indiana State Farm in Putnamville.

He said all his information about the rifle was turned over to the Warren Commission and the rifle was taken by Secret Service agents.

The Warren Commission named Lee Harvey Oswald as the slayer of Kennedy in Dallas, Tex., Nov. 22, 1963.

Riddle said San Antonio authorities informed him the salesman had no criminal record, was a member of the Young Communist League and an expert rifle marksman. He declined to name the salesman.

Riddle said the salesman registered at the Terre Haute House Nov. 25, 1963 and, according to the desk clerk, was carrying a "long package." Shortly after noon on Nov. 26, he checked out without the package, the former chief related.

The rifle, found by a maid, bore no fingerprints, Riddle said. Two telephone calls from the salesman's room Nov. 25 were to a Terre Haute gun shop and to a store that sold rifle ammunition, Riddle said.

He said investigators learned the salesman was told the weapon would sell for $5. Riddle said the salesman later bought a bus ticket to St. Louis.

Riddle was questioned by a newsman about the incident following investigations by Jim Garrison, New Orleans district attorney, into the assassination.

Riddle said he had received no word from Garrison and added, "I think Garrison may have something, but I don't plan to contact him with the information I have."